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Correspondence.

OLD MAJOLICA.

Editor of *The Art Amateur*:

SIR: In what respects did the old majolica ware differ from the modern? In what respect is the modern inferior?

"SIX MARK," Rochester, N. Y.

ANSWER.—The old majolica was especially famous for its lustre. Modern lustres are inferior in beauty to the old methods, especially the secret one known as the golden lustre—a yellow color overlaid with mother-of-pearl.

THE EBONIZING PROCESS.

Editor of *The Art Amateur*:

SIR: Can you give me a trustworthy recipe for ebonizing white wood? S. J. P., Chicago.

ANSWER.—The following has been strongly recommended to us: Get 1 quart of strong vinegar, ½ lb. extract of logwood, 2 oz. green copperas, 1 oz. China blue, ½ oz. nutgall. Place in iron pot, and boil over slow fire till all are well dissolved. When cool, it is ready for use. Next get ¼ pint of iron rust, which is obtained as follows: Take a handful of iron-filings and immerse them in strong vinegar for several days. Then measure off ¼ pint, and add to the above mixture.

THE TERM "RENAISSANCE."

Editor of *The Art Amateur*:

SIR: Please state what the term "Renaissance," so commonly employed in architecture and ornamental art, really signifies, and the exact period it covers, and oblige

A SUBSCRIBER, Selma, Ala.

ANSWER.—The term is applied to the ornament and architecture of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, and really signifies a "revival" of ideas which had lain dormant through several previous generations. Mr. Digby Wyatt remarks: "The truth is, that the material monuments of the ancient Romans, scattered thickly over the soil of Italy, were so substantial and majestic that it was impossible to live under their shadow and forget them. Fragments of exquisite beauty in stone, bronze, and marble were to be had for the trouble of turning up the soil that barely covered them, and thus they were from time to time pressed into service for tombs, and as accessories in buildings, in the construction of which the principles of art to which those fragments owed their beauty had been entirely lost sight of. . . . A protest was commenced in favor of the ancients and their arts by that great reviver of antique sculpture, Nicola Pisano. . . . The publications of Vitruvius at Rome in 1486 set the seal upon the classical tendencies of the age in matters of art, and afforded the means of speedily transmitting to other countries the details of ancient design, so warmly taken up throughout the whole of Italy. . . . It was scarcely, however, until the beginning of the century that the movement can be said to have borne really valuable fruit. In its earliest stage, the Renaissance of art in Italy was unquestionably a *revival of principles*, and it was not until the middle of the century that it came to be in anywise a *literal revival*."

VALUE OF AMERICAN COINS.

Editor of *The Art Amateur*:

SIR: Can you give me any information as to what American coins are worth more than their face value? A good deal of old silver passes through my hands, and some of it, I am told, would be highly prized by collectors. I know *THE ART AMATEUR* is not a numismatic journal, but I remember you had an interesting article on coins in your first issue, and I trust you can give me the desired information. NUMMUS, Easton, Pa.

ANSWER.—You would better put yourself in communication with some dealer, and he will tell you what coins are in special demand, and what prices he will pay for particular issues. According to a recent and presumably trustworthy article in *The New York Sun*, the silver dollar of 1794, with flowing hair, is worth \$15. The silver dollar of 1804 is worth \$200 to \$700. The silver dollar of 1838 is worth \$15. The half dollars of 1794 are worth \$25; of 1796, \$50; of 1797, \$10; of 1836, with milled edge, \$2. An original half dollar struck by the Confederate States in 1861 is worth \$200. The quarter dollar of 1796 is worth \$1; of 1823 and 1827, \$15; of 1853, 50 cents. The twenty-cent pieces of 1877 and 1878 are worth \$1.50 each. The dimes of 1796 are worth 50 cents; of 1797, 1798, 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, and 1804, \$1 each. In some cases there have been different issues of the same coin in the same year. One issue may be a rarity, and the other issue may be plentiful. Of half dimes, an issue of 1794 is worth \$1; of 1796, 1797, 1801, 1803, and 1805, \$1 each. The most valuable half dime is of the issue of 1802, which is worth \$12.75. Three-cent silver pieces from 1863 to 1868 are worth 25 cents each. Those of 1873 are worth 60 cents each. Liberty pennies vary from 10 cents to \$10 according to the perfectness of the stamp. The rarest nickel penny is the eagle of 1856, which is worth 50 cents. Many American gold pieces are worth more than their face. The \$20 of 1849 is worth \$50. All the \$10 gold issues from 1795 to 1801 are at a premium of from 50 cents to \$2. Most of the \$5 gold pieces from 1795 to 1807 are at a premium of 25 cents to \$1. The price varies according to the coinage with the large or small eagle used in the mint in those years. One stamp of \$5 gold coin of 1815 is worth \$25. A \$3 gold piece of 1875 is worth \$4. Many of the quarter eagles are at a premium of 50 cents to \$1. A \$1 gold piece of 1875 sells for \$2. The most valuable modern coin is a Confederate States silver dollar, which is valued at \$1000. The Confederate Government had a few struck at the New Orleans Mint for the inspection of the Confederate officials. One side of the coin

was made with a regular die used in the New Orleans Mint to strike off United States silver dollars. The other side was specially devised for the purpose. The legend reads: "Confederate States of America." There is a shield, with bars and seven stars, surmounted by a liberty-cap. The shield is enclosed by a wreath composed of cotton and sugar stalks.

A QUIET CEILING DECORATION.

Editor of *The Art Amateur*:

SIR: I am decorating my "library," and want to bring the staring white ceiling in harmony with the walls, which have been richly papered in dark olive tones. All the ceiling papers I have seen are too gorgeous and heavy for my purpose. What do you advise? SARTOR, New York.

ANSWER.—You can do nothing but paper the ceiling now. Before papering the walls you might have had it kalsomined in corn color or light buff, picking out the cornice in color to harmonize with the walls. We advise you now to select some simple ceiling paper, such as those designed by Messrs. Colman & Tiffany for Warren, Fuller & Co. If we remember right, there is among these a cream colored ground, irregularly studded with silver stars, excellent for your purpose.

A BLUE CEILING.

Editor of *The Art Amateur*:

SIR: What do you think of painting the ceiling of a drawing-room pure ultramarine? A lady insists on our doing so, much to our disgust. DECORATORS, Newark, N. J.

ANSWER.—There is nothing very objectionable in the idea in itself. You must be careful, however, as to the coloring of the cornice, in which pale blue and white should prevail, and a little pure red must be introduced.

A "KNOCK-OUT."

Editor of *The Art Amateur*:

SIR: Can you spare room to explain, in your correspondence column, the meaning of the term "knock-out," as applied to an auction sale? I am sure such an explanation would interest MANY READERS, San Francisco.

ANSWER.—A "knock-out" is a crafty method of procedure adopted by professional auction frequenters, who design to get the better of the innocent public. Mr. Litchfield, a London dealer in works of art, describes it as follows:

"The dealers who intend putting in their claim to the lot in question abstain from bidding, and it is knocked down to one of their number, generally the senior, if he is enabled to bid a higher price than any other purchaser present. They then adjourn to a convenient place, and hold, as it were, a kind of private auction among themselves.

"Thus, A. having bought lot 100 for £10, B., C., D., E. would offer an advance of, say, £2. A., however, thinking the article worth more, or perhaps having a special customer for it, would refuse this and make a further bid of £1. Any one who still felt speculatively inclined could continue to advance until all his opponents retired, upon which he would pay them out their shares in money. Thus, for the sake of explanation, let us suppose that the utmost trade value of the lot was reached when A. virtually offered £13. B., C., D., E. would now withdraw, upon which the advance of £2, in which they had all participated, would be divided into five portions of 8s. each, which A. would pay out, saving his own, and so, with the payment of the £10 to the auctioneer, holding the lot at £12. Instead of paying £12 12s., which he must have bid had he been opposed by the four other dealers who required the lot.

"In some instances, where articles of great value are sold, and the general public present are ignorant of their worth, considerable sums would be 'knocked out.' That such combinations cause a heavy loss to the estates entitled to benefit by the proceeds of a sale is evident; but it must be borne in mind that it is often the fault of an auctioneer whose knowledge of works of art is very partial; and his clients would be considerably benefited, were he to seek the advice of a respectable dealer, who, for a moderate fee, would give him an opinion or valuation of the goods he did not understand. The right of dealers to form a syndicate can scarcely be disputed, by which they gain the benefit of their judgment instead of others in whom they are not interested. The system, however, is a bad one, and has become further abused by the participation of dealers who are not bona fide purchasers, but join merely for the sake of taking out their 'shares' in money, and in these cases the 'knock-out' becomes a game of bluff, the result of which is, the bona fide purchaser has to pay profit to a number of the trade who haunt the sale-rooms for the purpose of levying a species of blackmail."

SUPPLEMENT DESIGNS.

PLATE XCII. is a series of designs for Easter egg decoration, drawn for *THE ART AMATEUR* by George R. Halm. It should be borne in mind that in drawing circles on an egg a compass must be used with a hinge in one leg, which hinged leg must be longer than the other one.

PLATE XCIII. is a group of designs for embroidery; directions for the treatment may be found on page 101.

PLATE XCIV. is a Japanese decorative design—"Plum and Bamboo"—suitable for painting on a screen or panel, or for embroidery.

PLATE XCV. is a flower and bird design, by Camille Piton, for a screen or oblong plaque, or the portion above, cut off by the curved line, may be painted on a circular plaque, the upper part to be filled in according to the artist's fancy. The flowers are pink, light carmine No. 1, shaded with carmine No. 3. The centre is silver-yellow, shaded with brown-green. The

leaves are deep chrome-green and yellow, for mixing for the first firing, with grass-green No. 5 and brown No. 108 for the second firing. The foliage on the groundwork is greenish-blue, and the birds are of very brilliant colors, such as red (carmine red), blue (ultramarine blue), yellow (silver-yellow), and brown.

New Publications.

LA RENAISSANCE EN FRANCE. Par Léon Palustre. Dessins et Gravures sous la Direction de Eugène Sadoux. Paris: A. Quantin, Imprimeur-Éditeur, MDCCCLXXIX. J. W. Bouton, New York (Livraisons Première, Deuxième et Troisième). This important production, "facile princeps" in its class, includes in its field of research most of the Departments of France. It will appear in thirty parts—three of which are issued—at twenty-five francs each, in Paris, while the earliest impressions, on Holland paper, range from fifty to sixty francs each. It is in folio; the paper is luxurious; the typography exquisite, and the work may safely challenge comparison with the masterpieces of book-making. Moreover, the illustrations represent the best etching of the period. A wealth of embellishment irradiates the text; the printer has used red with discrimination in the titles and initial letters, which are gracefully studied, and the conventional head-pieces are replaced by friezes and entablatures of genuine archæologic interest. Beginning in Flanders, the work gives a full-page etching of the grand old Bourse at Lille. A little further, we open at the brilliant and spirited plate, "Clocher de St. Amand," a consummate crystallization of renaissance architecture. The first and second stories of the "Hotel de Ville d'Arras" suggest what might have been done with the New York Post Office. The "Maison de la Rue des Vergeaux, à Amiens," presents a bold and beautiful elevation of two Venetian stories, supported on two broad, flat-pointed arches, with sculptured decorations in high relief. The "Chappelle de Tilloloy" is an interesting example of early Norman Gothic, with its circular towers surmounted with steep, undecorated cones, the only exemplifications of which we remember at the moment at home may be seen in the public court-house in Sixth Avenue, near Eighth street, New York, and in Mr. Richardson's Trinity Church, Boston. Nothing can be better worth study than the "Tombeau de Raoul de Lannoy, à Folleville," not only for the harmonious profusion of ornament, but as an instance of the unexpected resources of etching in the hands of a master. Almost incredible delicacy and the broadest effects of shadow are rendered with the freedom of an original drawing. In the second number, the "Vantaux de la Porte Méridionale de Beauvais," and "Détails des Vantaux," afford a glimpse of that almost riotous exuberance of imagination which marked structures of this prolific period. In the third number, among the illustrations of special interest, are "Chœur de l'Eglise Notre Dame, à Ferté-Milon," the sombre yet stately "Pavillon Henri II., au Chateau de Villers-Cotterets," the full-page "Chappelle" of the same chateau, and particularly the double-page "Pont et Galerie du Chateau de Fere en Tardenois," a most admirable etching, alone worth the price of the number to any appreciative collector.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

SIR DAVID WILKIE. Great Artists Series. New York: Scribner & Welford.

WAGNER. SCHUBERT. ROSSINI. WEBER. Great Musicians Series. New York: Scribner & Welford.

MUSICAL ACOUSTICS. By John Broadhouse. Price \$3. Imported by Scribner & Welford, New York.

DECORATION AND FURNITURE OF TOWN HOUSES. By Robert W. Edis. Scribner & Welford.

A NOBLE pair of Sèvres vases, decorated by Abram Schilt, which were exhibited at the Paris Exposition in 1878, by Barreau, were imported recently by Messrs. Schneider, Campbell & Co. for Mr. C. J. Osborne, of this city. They are of delicate Sèvres blue, thirty-nine inches high, and stand on pedestals of Mexican onyx, with gilt mountings, carried out in the Louis XVI. style of vase decorations. Such a handsome pair has seldom been seen in this country.

LADIES who have paid attention to decorative painting on silk and satin will be interested in a novel and suggestive evening dress, on exhibition at Lord & Taylor's. It is a most elaborate white satin, made in attractive fashion, whose only decoration is its painted garniture of roses and forget-me-nots, with long-leaved grasses ingeniously arranged. On the tablier they expand in a large group; on the folds of the panier they extend in garlands, and trail down the panels of the skirt. The most marked feature is the broad band of flowers sweeping down the train. This is very handsomely designed, and on the part of the decorator, who belongs to this city, shows great skill in varying the details of the decoration without the appearance of repetition. Such dresses are naturally only produced to order.

A DISTINGUISHING feature of the Art School of the Misses Osgood, in the Domestic Building, is that pupils are not required to take any stated number of lessons, compelling regular attendance for a series of months. The instruction being at the option of the student, this school affords residents whose household and social duties occupy the greater portion of their time every week the opportunity to make a beginning in art at any time most convenient to them, and continue at will. Strangers visiting the city can also avail themselves of this advantage.